



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2006

THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD AND THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY Three Students to be Honored for Submitting Essays

HARTFORD, Conn. – The Connecticut National Guard and the United States Postal Service will celebrate black history and contributions in a special program on **Friday, February 17, 2006** at Nett Hall, Camp Rell, Niantic, Connecticut, from 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

The celebration will focus on three students who will read their winning essays at this ceremony. This year's winners are Brenton Samuel Gittens, Grade 5, Charles E. Murphy School, Oakdale, Conn., Malcom Little, Grade 8, Metropolitan Learning Center, Bloomfield, Conn., and Autumn Thomas, Grade 11, Old Saybrook High School, Old Saybrook, Conn.

All three students will be presented with awards for their essays and U.S. Savings Bonds from the U.S. Postal Service.

Maj. Gen. Thaddeus J. Martin, the Adjutant General and the Commander of the Connecticut National Guard and Mr. Norman Lalonde, Postmaster, New Haven, Connecticut will present the awards.

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CONNECTICUT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



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The event's organizing committee chose the three essay contest winners out of more than 130 entries.

The keynote speaker for this year's celebration is Dr. Jefferson Wiggins.

Wiggins is an author, educator, lecturer, mentor, and community leader who lives in New Fairfield, Conn. He was born in rural Alabama to sharecropper parents. As a result, he had little opportunity to attend school. He enlisted in the United States Army as a teenager, escaping a life of crippling poverty and racism.

Wiggins served in Europe during World War II and received a field commission from the legendary General George S. Patton. He was one of the few black officers of that era. Upon returning from Europe, he was awarded a high school diploma in his hometown of Dothan, Alabama and went on to study Political science at Tennessee State University.

With his wife, Janice, he founded the Wiggins Fund, a donor advised fund of the New Fairfield Community Foundation. The fund supports not-for-profit educational programs and initiatives that benefit children, support multicultural education, diversity, or mentoring, as well as initiatives that contribute to building a more open and civil society. Wiggins continues to spread his message by visiting and speaking at public schools, military and government offices, and non-profit organizations.

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Governor M. Jodi Rell recently recognized Wiggins for his lifetime commitment to multicultural education. December 15, 2005 was proclaimed Jefferson Wiggins' Day in the State of Connecticut. As stated in the proclamation, "This recognition celebrates your many contributions to the lives of others as well as your tireless efforts to build a more open society, with the hope of bridging the gap between all races".

The United States Postal Service will dedicate the Hattie McDaniel Stamp. Hattie McDaniel, movie actress, singer, radio and television personality was the first African American to win an Academy Award and is the 29th honoree in the U.S. Postal Service's long-running Black Heritage commemorative stamp series. The 39-cent Hattie McDaniel commemorative stamp highlights the achievements of this legendary performer who won the Oscar for her role as Mammy in the award-winning 1939 movie "Gone With the Wind."

Hattie McDaniel stamp illustrator, Timothy O'Brien, will be in attendance at the event.

Sgt. 1st Class Debbie Wilson of Connecticut Army National Guard is the master of ceremonies.

The Connecticut National Guard and the U.S. Postal Service sponsor the 20th annual program.

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